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THE JOURNALS
ZVEZDA AND *LENINGRAD*

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C.P.S.U.(B.),
AUGUST 14, 1946



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THE JOURNALS
ZVEZDA AND LENINGRAD

*From a Decision
of the Central Committee, C.P.S.U.(B.),
August 14, 1946*

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) places on record that the Leningrad literary journals *Zvezda* and *Leningrad* are being conducted in an absolutely unsatisfactory manner.

Together with noteworthy and well-written works by Soviet authors, *Zvezda* has of late published many articles and stories that carry no message and are ideologically harmful. It was a gross mistake on the part of *Zvezda* to provide a literary pulpit to Zoshchenko, whose writings are alien to Soviet literature. The *Zvezda* editors were aware that Zoshchenko has long specialized in vulgar, puerile writings, in the preaching of vulgarity, of the utterly rotten conception that literature is void of purpose or meaning and is apolitical. This was calculated to mislead our youth and poison their minds. The latest of Zoshchenko's stories, *The Adventures of a Monkey*, (*Zvezda*, No. 5-6, 1946) is a vile lampoon of Soviet life and Soviet people. Zoshchenko draws an ugly caricature of Soviet customs and Soviet people whom he slanderously represents as crude, uncultured, stupid, with philistine tastes and manners, and couples his malicious libel on our way of life with anti-Soviet attacks.

It was all the more impermissible for *Zvezda* to throw open its pages to such vulgar individuals and literary scum as Zoshchenko, since its editors were well aware of his political complexion. They knew also of Zoshchenko's unseemly behaviour during the war, when, far from helping the Soviet people in their battle against the German invader, he produced such a loathsome concoction as *Before Sunrise*, a proper appraisal of which, as of Zo-

shchenko's literary "works" in general, was given in the *Bolshevik* magazine.

Zvezda also gives wide prominence to the writings of Anna Akhmatova, whose literary and political complex-ion has long been clear to the Soviet public. Akhmatova is a typical exponent of the barren and idea-less poetry that is so alien to our people. Her verse, permeated with sentiments of pessimism and despondency, is in line with the tastes prevalent in prerevolutionary drawing-room poetry, which went no further than the decadent aesthet-icism of the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy—"art for art's sake"—and refuses to march in step with the peo-ple. Akhmatova's poetry is inimical to the education of our young generation and cannot be tolerated in Soviet literature.

The fact that Zoshchenko and Akhmatova were allowed to play an active part in the journal undoubtedly fostered ideological discordance and disorganization among the Leningrad writers. Writings began to appear in *Zvezda* cultivating and encouraging an obsequious at-titude towards present-day Western bourgeois culture, an attitude that is alien to Soviet people. It published writ-ings inspired by sentiments of despondency, pessimism and disillusionment (verse by Sadofyev and Komissarova in No. 1, 1946, etc.). By publishing these works, the edi-tors aggravated their errors and reduced the ideological standards of the journal to a still lower level.

In addition to allowing works of alien ideology to ap-pear in the journal, the editors lowered the literary requirements for contributions, with the result that *Zvez-da* has been filled with stories and plays of low literary value (*The Road of Time* by Yagdfeld, *Swan Lake* by Stein, etc.). This lack of discrimination in selecting ma-terial for publication has led to the lowering of the jour-nal's literary standards.

The Central Committee notes the particularly unsatis-factory manner in which the journal *Leningrad* is con-

ducted. This publication has constantly thrown open its pages to the vulgar and calumnious writings of Zoshchenko and to Akhmatova's vapid and apolitical verse. Its editors, like the editors of *Zvezda*, committed the grave mistake of publishing several items permeated with the spirit of servility to everything foreign. *Leningrad* carried a number of stories expounding erroneous views (*Over Berlin* by Varshavsky and Rest, *Outpost* by Slonimsky). A poem by Khazin, *Onegin's Return*, is a calumny on the Leningrad of our day disguised as a literary parody. Most of the stories and articles appearing in *Leningrad* are puerile and of low literary merit.

How could it happen that *Zvezda* and *Leningrad*, published in the heroic city of Leningrad, which is famed for its advanced revolutionary traditions and has always been a source of progressive ideas and culture, permitted apolitical writings that are alien to Soviet literature and devoid of ideas to appear in its pages?

What is the significance of the mistakes committed by the editors of *Zvezda* and *Leningrad*?

The leading workers of these journals, and above all their editors, Comrades Sayanov and Likharev, forgot the Leninist proposition that our journals, whether scientific or literary, cannot be apolitical. They forgot that our journals are powerful media of the Soviet state in educating the Soviet people, and especially the youth, and must therefore be guided by what constitutes the vital basis of the Soviet system, its policy. The Soviet system cannot tolerate the education of the youth in a spirit of indifference to Soviet policy, in a spirit of insouciance and disdain for ideology and ideas.

The vitality of Soviet literature, the most progressive literature in the world, resides in the fact that it has not, nor can it have, any other interests save those of the people and the state. The task of Soviet literature is to help the state correctly to educate the youth, cater to its needs, rear the young generation to be buoyant, confident in its

cause, undaunted by difficulties and prepared to surmount all obstacles.

That is why the advocacy of apolitical and idea-less art, of "art for art's sake," is alien to Soviet literature, harmful to the interests of the Soviet people and state and must not be allowed in our journals.

Lack of principle on the part of the leading workers of *Zvezda* and *Leningrad* has also led them to be guided in their relations with authors by personal interests, by personal friendship, rather than by the interests of correctly educating the Soviet people and giving proper political guidance to writers. Criticism was dulled in a desire to avoid spoiling friendly relations. Manifestly worthless works were published out of fear of offending friends. This sort of liberalism, which sacrifices the interests of the people and the state, the correct education of our youth, for the sake of personal friendship, and which tends to dull criticism, leads to a situation when the writer no longer strives to improve his work, loses his sense of responsibility to the people, the state and the Party, and ceases to make progress.

All this testifies to the fact that the editors of *Zvezda* and *Leningrad* have failed to cope with the duties entrusted them, and have committed grave political errors in the conduct of the journals.

The Central Committee establishes that the Board of the Union of Soviet Writers, and in particular its Chairman, Comrade Tikhonov, took no measures to improve *Zvezda* and *Leningrad*. Far from combating the pernicious influence of Zoshchenko, Akhmatova and similar un-Soviet writers on Soviet literature, the Board actually condoned the penetration into the journals of tendencies and customs alien to Soviet letters.

The Leningrad City Committee of the C.P.S.U.(B.) failed to notice the very grave errors of *Zvezda* and *Leningrad*, relinquished direction of the journals and enabled individuals like Zoshchenko and Akhmatova, who

are foreign to Soviet literature, to play a leading part in them. More, knowing the Party's attitude to Zoshchenko and his "works," the Leningrad City Committee (Comrades Kapustin and Shirokov), though it had no authority to do so, adopted a decision on June 26, 1946, endorsing a new editorial board for *Zvezda* which included Zoshchenko. The Leningrad City Committee thus committed a gross political error. The *Leningradskaya Pravda* made a mistake by publishing Yuri German's dubious review in praise of Zoshchenko in its issue of July 6, 1946.

The Propaganda Division of the Central Committee, C.P.S.U.(B.) did not ensure proper control over the Leningrad journals.

The Central Committee, C.P.S.U.(B.) resolves:

1. The editors of *Zvezda*, the Board of the Union of Soviet Writers and the Propaganda Division of the C.C., C.P.S.U.(B.), are instructed to take measures utterly to eliminate the mistakes and shortcomings of the journal indicated in this decision, rectify its policy, ensure that it be conducted on a high ideological and literary plane and discontinue to give space to Zoshchenko, Akhmatova and their ilk.

2. In view of the absence of suitable conditions at present for the publication of two literary journals in Leningrad, the publication of *Leningrad* shall be discontinued and all Leningrad literary forces concentrated in *Zvezda*.

3. With a view to introducing proper order in the work of the *Zvezda* editorial board and in order substantially to improve the contents of the journal, *Zvezda* shall have an editor-in-chief and an advisory editorial board. The editor-in-chief shall bear full responsibility for the ideological and political line of the journal and for the quality of its contents.

4. A. M. Yegolin is appointed editor-in-chief of *Zvezda*, while continuing his work as deputy head of the Propaganda Division of the C.C., C.P.S.U.(B.).

THE DRAMA REPERTOIRE AND MEASURES TO IMPROVE IT

*Decision
of the Central Committee, C.P.S.U.(B.),
August 26, 1946*

Having discussed the position with regard to the drama repertoire and measures for its improvement, the Central Committee, C.P.S.U.(B.) considers that the present repertoire of drama theatres is unsatisfactory.

The principal defect of the present drama repertoire is that plays by Soviet authors on contemporary themes have actually been crowded out of the country's leading theatres. Out of the 20 plays currently being staged in the Moscow Art Theatre, only 3 deal with present-day Soviet life; the figures for the Maly Theatre are 20 and 3 respectively, 9 and 2 for the Mossovet Theatre, 10 and 2 for the Vakhtangov Theatre, 11 and 3 for the Kamerny Theatre, 10 and 2 for the Pushkin Theatre (Leningrad), 11 and 3 for the Ivan Franko Theatre (Kiev), 11 and 2 for the Shevchenko Theatre (Kharkov), and 17 and 5 for the Sverdlovsk Drama Theatre.

The obviously abnormal position with regard to the drama repertoire is aggravated by the fact that among even the small number of plays on contemporary themes produced by our theatres, some are of a low artistic and ideological standards (*Forced Landing* by Vodopyanov and Laptev, *Birthday* by the Tur brothers, *The Delayed Plane* by Rybak and Savchenko, *New Year's Eve* by A. Gladkov, *Emergency Law* by the Tur brothers, *Window in the Woods* by Rakhmanov and Ryss, *Boatwoman* by Pogodin, and several other plays). As a rule, these plays draw an ugly caricature of Soviet people, depicting them as crude and uncultured, with philistine tastes and manners. On the other hand, negative personages are portrayed as possessing stronger character, will power, ability and ingenuity. The plots of these plays are frequently

artificial and false, with the result that they present Soviet life in a wrong and distorted light. A large proportion of current plays on contemporary themes are crude and unartistic, written in an extremely slipshod manner, without any literary skill, and betray their authors' insufficient knowledge of literary and folk Russian. In addition, many theatres show singular lack of responsibility in the production of plays devoted to Soviet life. Not infrequently theatre directors entrust the staging of these plays to second-rate producers and incompetent and inexperienced actors, and make no effort to attain high standards of artistry in staging and performance. As a consequence, performances of plays on contemporary themes are drab and of low artistic quality. All of this has produced a situation when many drama theatres are not effective centres of culture, propagandists of the advanced Soviet ideology and morality. The present state of the drama repertoire does not conform with what is required for the education of the working people and cannot be tolerated in the Soviet theatre.

A major shortcoming in the work of both the Committee on Arts and the drama theatres is the inordinate attention devoted to plays on historical themes. A number of plays now running in our theatres idealize kings, khans and courtiers and have no historical or educational value whatsoever (Scribe's *Margaret of Navarre*, Haji Shukurov's *Khorezm*, Kasymov's *Takhmos of Hodjent*, Tajibayev's *We, Kazakhs*, Burungulov's *Idukai and Muradym*).

The Central Committee, C.P.S.U.(B.) is of the opinion that the Committee on Arts has been pursuing a wrong policy in introducing plays by foreign bourgeois authors into the drama repertoire. On the instructions of the Committee, the Fine Arts Publishing House has brought out a collection of contemporary British and 'American one-act plays that are typical specimens of low standard and vulgar foreign dramaturgy with its frank advocacy of

bourgeois views and morality. Plays recently sent out by the Committee on Arts to drama theatres in various parts of the country include *The Murder of Mr. Parker* by Morrison; *The Magistrate* by Pinero; *The Circle* and *Penelope* by W. Somerset Maugham; *Le petit café* by Bernard; *Four-Flushers* by Labiche and Delacour; *The Man Who Came to Dinner* by Kaufman and Hart; *Barbara* by Durand; *Corsican Feud* by Augier and Sandeau, etc., some of which have been staged. The production of plays by foreign bourgeois authors was, in effect, an attempt to use the Soviet stage for propaganda of reactionary bourgeois ideology and morality, an attempt to poison the minds of Soviet people with a world outlook that is hostile to Soviet society and to galvanize survivals of capitalism in the people's minds and everyday life. The gravest political error committed by the Committee on Arts was this wide dissemination among theatrical workers of such plays and their production by Soviet theatres.

The Central Committee, C.P.S.U.(B.) places on record that the Committee on Arts followed in the wake of the more backward section of theatrical workers, lost control over the choice of plays for central and provincial theatres, allowing the repertoire to be selected without direction or guidance.

In the opinion of the Central Committee, one of the fundamental reasons for the major defects in the repertoire of the drama theatres is the unsatisfactory work of our playwrights, many of whom stand aloof from the vital issues of our day, are unacquainted with the life of the people and their requirements and have not learned to portray the finest traits and qualities of the Soviet citizen. These playwrights forget that the Soviet theatre can discharge its important function of educating the working people only if it becomes an active propagandist of the policy of the Soviet state, which constitutes the vital foundation of the Soviet system.

The work of our playwrights betrays lack of contact

and creative cooperation with the theatre. The Board of the Union of Soviet Writers, whose duty it is to direct the creative work of the playwrights in the interest of further developing art and literature, has to all intents and purposes ceased to give leadership to the playwrights, is doing nothing to enhance the ideological and artistic standards of their work, and is not combating vulgarity and substandard productions in dramaturgy.

The unsatisfactory state of the drama repertoire is due also to the absence of principled, Bolshevik theatrical criticism. Drama criticism in the press is confined to a small number of professionals, and newspapers, literary and theatrical magazines are advancing too few new critics capable of giving an objective and impartial analysis of plays and performances. Some critics are guided in their judgment of plays and performances not by a desire to contribute to the ideological and artistic development of the Soviet drama and theatrical art in general, that is, by the interests of the state and the people, but by group and personal interests and considerations of friendship. Reviews of plays are often written by incompetent persons who, instead of analyzing new productions on their merits, indulge in subjective and arbitrary appraisals that are at variance with the actual significance and quality of the play. The reviews are often written in an obscure language that is unintelligible to the reader. *Pravda*, *Izvestia*, *Komsomolskaya Pravda* and *Trud* underestimate the immense educational importance of the theatre and devote all too little space to problems of art.

The newspaper *Soviet Art* and the magazine *Theatre* are being conducted in an absolutely unsatisfactory manner. The purpose of these publications is to help playwrights and theatrical workers produce plays of high ideological and artistic standards. Instead, they give only hesitant and inadequate support to good plays and lavishly praise mediocre productions, hush up the mis-

takes of theatres and the Committee on Arts, thus encouraging tendencies and customs that are alien to the Soviet press. Theatrical criticism on the pages of *Soviet Art* is confined to narrow departmental interests and sets friendly relations between critics and theatrical workers and the interests of individuals above national interests. *Soviet Art* has failed to take a correct and principled stand in evaluating plays and performances and, far from promoting Bolshevik theatrical criticism, has thus actually hampered its development. This being the state of affairs with regard to dramatic "criticism," some critics, playwrights and theatrical workers are losing their sense of responsibility to the people, are ceasing to advance and are making no contribution to the continued development of Soviet art.

The Central Committee, C.P.S.U.(B.) resolves:

1. To instruct the Chairman of the Committee on Arts, Comrade Khrapchenko, to eliminate within a minimum of time the grave shortcomings and mistakes indicated in this decision.
2. In view of the vast importance of the theatre as a medium of communist education of the people, the Central Committee instructs the Committee on Arts and the Board of the Union of Soviet Writers to concentrate attention on creating plays dealing with contemporary Soviet life.

The task which the Central Committee sets playwrights and theatrical workers is to produce plays of high artistic value that vividly portray the life of Soviet society and Soviet people. Playwrights and theatres must depict the life of Soviet society in its constant forward movement; they must make every effort to promote the further development of the finest traits of the Soviet character, which were brought out so forcefully and saliently during the Great Patriotic War. It is the duty of our playwrights and producers to take an active part in the work of educating the Soviet people, to meet their ad-

vanced cultural requirements, to educate the Soviet youth to be optimistic, buoyant, devoted to its country and confident in the victory of our cause, undaunted by obstacles and capable of overcoming every difficulty. At the same time, the Soviet theatre must show that these qualities are intrinsic not only in chosen individuals, in heroes, but in the millions of Soviet men and women.

All authors capable of writing plays should be enlisted for active and creative participation in this important work of building up a repertoire for our theatres that will be worthy of our theatregoing public.

3. The principal practical task of the Committee on Arts shall be to ensure the production by every drama theatre of no less than two or three new plays annually of high ideological and artistic standards on present-day Soviet themes.

The theatres must fundamentally improve the quality of production of contemporary Soviet plays, appointing to this work their leading producers and actors and striving for a high degree of perfection in stage setting, etc.

4. The Committee on Arts is instructed to delete from the repertoire all idea-less and unartistic plays and to exercise constant control in order that puerile, idea-less plays, propagating erroneous views and of low artistic value shall not appear on the Soviet stage.

5. In view of the importance of criticism for the development of theatrical art, the editors of *Pravda*, *Izvestia*, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, *Trud*, *Soviet Art* and the *Literary Gazette* are instructed to enlist politically mature and competent drama and literary critics to contribute to these papers, regularly to publish reviews of new plays, and resolutely combat "nonpolitical" and "nonideological" theatrical criticism.

The editors of republican and regional newspapers shall be instructed systematically to publish reviews and articles about new plays produced in local theatres.

6. The Central Committee finds that a serious hindrance to Soviet plays appearing on the stage is the fact that a large number of bodies and officials have authority to revise these plays and authorize their publication and performance. New plays are submitted for examination to the local Art Boards, the Republican Committees on Arts, the Chief Repertoire Board, the Central Theatrical Department of the Committee on Arts, the Art Council of that Committee, to theatre directors, editors of periodicals and officials of publishing houses. This red-tape is harmful, tends to encourage irresponsibility and hampers the appearance of new plays on the Soviet stage.

The Committee on Arts is instructed to remove all obstacles to the publication, circulation and production of plays by Soviet authors and to reduce to a minimum the number of bodies authorized to pass judgment on plays. Comrade Khrapchenko shall be made personally responsible for the timely and rapid examination of all plays submitted to the Committee by Soviet authors.

7. The Central Committee finds that the Art Council of the Committee on Arts is not fulfilling its functions and is not helping to improve the quality of plays, or to enhance their ideological and artistic standards. It is working in isolation, the results of its activities remain unknown to the mass of theatrical workers and are not made public in the press.

The Committee on Arts is instructed radically to improve the work of its Art Council, the meetings of which should be devoted to a critical examination of new plays and productions. *Soviet Art* shall carry regular reports of the Council's activities.

8. The Committee on Arts is authorized to arrange in 1946-1947, in conjunction with the Board of the Union of Soviet Writers, an all-U.S.S.R. competition for the best plays dealing with contemporary Soviet life.

9. In view of the extremely limited nature of the drama repertoire in the Union and Autonomous Repub-

lics, and of the fact that local playwrights have devoted themselves to themes of the distant past, the Committee on Arts is instructed to take steps to have the best works of Soviet playwrights translated into the languages of the peoples of the U.S.S.R. and included in the theatre repertoire of the various Republics.

10. The Committee on Arts, together with the Board of Union of Soviet Writers, is instructed to convene this autumn a conference of playwrights and theatrical workers to discuss the repertoire and joint creative efforts by playwrights and theatres.

THE FILM
GLOWING LIFE

Decision
of the Central Committee, C.P.S.U.(B.),
September 4, 1946

The Central Committee, C.P.S.U.(B.) places on record that the film *Glowing Life* (second series, director L. Lukov, scenario by P. Nilin) produced by the Ministry of Cinematography of the U.S.S.R., is faulty in its ideological and political aspects, and of an extremely low artistic standard.

What are the faults and shortcomings of *Glowing Life*?

The film depicts only one small episode of the initial efforts in rehabilitating the Donbas coal area and does not provide a correct idea of the actual scope and significance of the rehabilitation work carried out by the Soviet state in the Donbas. Moreover, the rehabilitation of the Donbas is relegated to a minor place in the film, while attention is focussed on a crude portrayal and presentation of all manner of personal emotions and domestic scenes. As a result, the contents of the film do not correspond to its title. More, the title *Glowing Life* in this case sounds like a mockery of Soviet realities.

The film obviously confuses two distinct periods in our industrial development. The level of technology and technical proficiency depicted in *Glowing Life* is more typical of the rehabilitation of the Donbas following the Civil War, than of present-day Donbas with its high level of technology and culture, attained during the Stalin five-year plans. *Glowing Life* leaves audiences with the wrong impression that the rehabilitation of the Donbas mines, following the expulsion of the German invaders from the area, and the mining of coal are based not on modern and advanced technology and the mechanization of mining processes, but on sheer physical effort, the

application of patently obsolete machinery and conservative methods. The film thus presents a distorted picture of our postwar industrial rehabilitation, which is based on the use of the most up-to-date machinery and on a high level of technical proficiency.

From the way *Glowing Life* depicts the rehabilitation of the Donbas one might be led to think that the workers' initiative in restarting the mines not only failed to meet with state support, but actually encountered the opposition of state organizations. This interpretation of relations between state organizations and the workers is absolutely false and erroneous, for everyone knows that in our country every initiative of the workers meets with broad support from the state.

The role of Party functionaries in this connection is incorrectly portrayed in the film. The secretary of the colliery Party organization is placed in an obviously absurd position, inasmuch as his support of the workers' initiative in restarting the pit may, as the film implies, lead to his expulsion from the Party. The authors of *Glowing Life* depict matters in such a way as to imply that the Party can do such a thing as expel members who are eager to promote economic rehabilitation.

The film incorrectly presents the background of rehabilitation in the Donbas. It leaves one with the impression that the Patriotic War concluded with the liberation of the area from the German invaders, that the army was demobilized at the very beginning of the rehabilitation, and that all soldiers and partisan fighters returned to peaceful pursuits. The war, which was at its height in this period, is referred to as a matter of the remote past.

Glowing Life upholds backwardness, lack of culture and ignorance. Entirely without warrant and contrary to fact, its producers try to make out that technically ignorant workers with retrograde views and sentiments are advanced en masse to leading posts. The director and author of the screen play failed to understand that our

country has a high regard for, and boldly promotes, cultured people, men and women of advanced views who have gained a good knowledge of their work, and not backward and uncultured individuals. They failed to understand that today, when the Soviet system has created its own intellectual forces, it is absurd and preposterous to depict as a positive feature the promotion to leading posts of backward and uncultured persons.

Glowing Life gives a false and distorted portrayal of Soviet people. Workers and engineers engaged in the rehabilitation of the Donbas are shown as backward individuals with a low level of culture and with very low moral standards. The chief characters in the film spend most of their time in idleness, empty chatter and drinking. Even those whom the authors try to bring out as the best characters in the picture are inveterate drunkards. The film takes as its principal heroes men who had served in the German police. One of them (Usynin) is of a type that is absolutely alien to the Soviet system. He remained in the Donbas when the Germans were in occupation, and his disintegrating and provocative activities go unpunished. The film endows Soviet people with habits that are in no way characteristic of our society. For example, Red Army men wounded in the battle to liberate the pit are left in the field without any assistance being given them, and a miner's wife (Sonya) displays complete indifference and nonchalance as she walks past them. The film shows the treatment of young women who have come to work in the Donbas as bureaucratic and insulting. The girls are housed in a dirty, dilapidated barrack and left to the care of Usynin, an outright bureaucrat and scoundrel. The pit management does not show even elementary concern for their welfare. Instead of repairing the damp barrack with its leaking roof, it sends a group of entertainers with accordion and guitar to amuse them, adding insult to injury.

Glowing Life is evidence of the fact that some of our

art workers, though they live among Soviet people, fail to notice the high spiritual qualities of the Soviet citizen and have not learned truthfully to portray these qualities through their artistic media.

From the artistic point of view the film is likewise beneath all criticism. The picture lacks a general conception and sequence. Its various episodes are connected only by numerous scenes of drunken debauches, cheap songs, love scenes and bedroom conversations. The songs (music by N. Bogoslovsky, words by A. Fatyanov and V. Agatov) are permeated with a beer-room melancholy and are utterly alien to Soviet people. The techniques employed by the producers are calculated to appeal to indiscriminate tastes, particularly to those of backward elements, and tend to crowd out the basic theme of the picture, the rehabilitation of the Donbas. The group of talented Soviet actors engaged in the picture were used by its producers for a wrong purpose. The actors were cast in ridiculous roles, and their talents employed to depict crude characters and scenes of dubious content.

The Central Committee, C.P.S.U.(B.) establishes that in addition to this faulty film, the Ministry of Cinematography (Comrade Bolshakov) has of late produced a number of other substandard films advocating erroneous views—the second series of *Ivan Grozny* (director S. Eisenstein), *Admiral Nakhtimov* (director V. Pudovkin), *Ordinary Folk* (directors G. Kozintsev and L. Trauberg).

What is the explanation of the frequent appearance of films preaching false and erroneous views? Why have such well-known Soviet producers as Comrades Lukov, Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Kozintsev and Trauberg, who created highly artistic films in the past, met with failure?

The fact of the matter is that many of our leading cinema workers—producers, directors and scenario writers—are taking a lighthearted and irresponsible attitude to their duties and are not working conscientiously on the

films they produce. The chief defect in their work is failure to study subject matter. Pudovkin set about the filming of *Admiral Nakhimov* without making a detailed study of the subject. The result was that he distorted the historical facts and produced a film not about Nakhimov, but about receptions and balls intermingled with episodes from Nakhimov's life. The film failed to record such important historical events as the action of the Russian fleet at Sinop where the Turkish commander-in-chief and a group of Turkish admirals were taken prisoner. Producer Eisenstein betrayed ignorance of historical facts in the second series of *Ivan Grozny*, depicting Ivan Grozny's progressive army, the *oprichniki*, as a gang of degenerates reminiscent of the American Ku Klux Klan. Ivan Grozny, a man of strong will and character, is shown as a spineless weakling, as a Hamlet type. The authors and producers of *Glowing Life* have betrayed ignorance of present-day Donbas and its people.

One of the fundamental reasons for the production of worthless films is the lack of knowledge of subject matter and the lighthearted attitude of scenario writers and producers to their work.

The Central Committee finds that the Ministry of Cinematography, and primarily its head, Comrade Bolshakov, exercises inadequate supervision over film studios, producers and scenario writers, is doing too little to improve the quality of films and is spending large sums of money to no useful purpose. Leading officials of the Ministry of Cinematography take an irresponsible attitude to the work entrusted them and are indifferent to the ideological and political content and artistic merits of the films being produced.

The Central Committee is of the opinion that the work of the Ministry's Art Council is incorrectly organized. The Council does not ensure impartial and businesslike criticism of films scheduled for production. It often takes an apolitical attitude in its judgment of films and pays

little attention to their idea-content. Many of its members display lack of principle in their assessment of films, their judgments being based on personal, friendly relations with the producers. Only this can explain why, in discussing *Glowing Life* the Art Council failed to see through its idea-content, displayed harmful liberalism and gave the film an absolutely unwarranted high appraisal. The absence of criticism in the cinema and the prevalent narrow-circle atmosphere are among the chief reasons for the production of poor films.

Art workers must realize that those who continue to take an irresponsible, lighthearted attitude to their work, may well find themselves superfluous and outside the ranks of progressive Soviet art, for the cultural requirements and demands of the Soviet theatregoer have developed and the Party and Government will continue to cultivate among the people good taste and encourage exacting demands on works of art.

The Central Committee, C.P.S.U.(B.) resolves:

1. In view of the aforesaid, to forbid the release of the second series of *Glowing Life*.
2. The Ministry of Cinematography of the U.S.S.R. and its Art Council must draw all the necessary lessons and conclusions from the present decision of the C.C., C.P.S.U.(B.) and organize the production of feature films in such a way as to preclude any possibility whatsoever of films like *Glowing Life* appearing in the future.

MURADEL'S OPERA
THE GREAT FRIENDSHIP

Decision
of the Central Committee, C.P.S.U.(B.),
February 10, 1948

The Central Committee, C.P.S.U.(B.) is of the opinion that the opera *The Great Friendship* (music by V. Muradeli, libretto by G. Mdivani), staged by the Bolshoi Theatre of the U.S.S.R. for the thirtieth anniversary of the October Revolution, is a faulty, unartistic production, both in its music and plot.

The opera's principal defects reside, first and foremost, in its music, which is inexpressive and vapid. *The Great Friendship* does not contain a single melody or air likely to be remembered by audiences. Its music is discordant and disharmonious, built entirely on dissonance and jarring sound combinations. Some parts of the score and some scenes, which aspire to melody, are suddenly interrupted by discordant noises that are absolutely foreign to normal human hearing and have a depressing effect on the listener. There is no organic connection between the music and the episodes depicted on the stage. The vocal parts of the opera—choral, solo and ensemble singing—leave a very drab impression. The general result is that the potentialities of both orchestra and singers are not made use of.

The composer has not drawn on the wealth of folk melodies, songs, tunes and dance motives that are so abundant in the folk creations of the peoples of the U.S.S.R., and in particular among the peoples of the North Caucasus, where the action of the opera is laid.

In his desire to achieve a falsely conceived "originality," Muradeli ignored and disregarded the finest traditions and experience of classical opera, and particularly of Russian classical opera. The latter is distinguished for its rich intrinsic content, wealth and wide range of mel-

ody, artistry, refined and clear musical idiom—things that have made the Russian opera, which is rooted in the life of the people, the best in the world, a genre loved and understood by wide sections of the people.

The Great Friendship sets out to portray the struggle for Soviet power and the friendship of the peoples in the North Caucasus in 1918-1920. But its story is historically false and artificial, for it creates the incorrect impression that such Caucasian peoples as the Georgians and Ossetians were at that time hostile to the Russian people. This is incorrect historically, because in that period in the North Caucasus it was the Ingushi and Chechens who hindered the establishment of friendship among the peoples.

The Central Committee considers that the failure of Muradeli's opera results from its author having taken the path of formalism, which is a false path and fatal to the creative work of the Soviet composer.

The conference of Soviet music workers convened by the Central Committee, C.P.S.U.(B.), has shown that the failure of Muradeli's opera is no isolated instance, but is intimately associated with the present unsatisfactory state of Soviet music, with the fact that the formalistic trend has gained currency among Soviet composers.

As early as 1936, in connection with Dmitri Shostakovich's opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk County*, *Pravda*, organ of the Central Committee, C.P.S.U.(B.), sharply criticized the anti-popular and formalistic distortions in the works of Shostakovich and showed how pernicious and dangerous this trend was for the further development of Soviet music. *Pravda*, which published its article on the instructions of the Central Committee, clearly formulated what the Soviet people expected of their composers.

Notwithstanding these warnings, and despite the directives issued by the Central Committee in its decisions on the journals *Zvezda* and *Leningrad*, the film

Glowing Life and on the drama repertoire and measures for its improvement, no change has been effected in the realm of Soviet music. Successful work by individual Soviet composers in creating new songs that have won wide popularity among the people, music for films, etc., does not alter the general state of affairs. The position is particularly unsatisfactory with regard to symphony and opera music. This refers to composers who adhere to the formalistic, anti-popular trend which has found its consummate expression in the works of Dmitri Shostakovich, Sergei Prokofieff, Aram Khachaturyan, V. Shebalin, G. Popov, N. Myaskovsky and others. Formalistic distortions and anti-democratic trends alien to the Soviet people and its artistic tastes are especially evident in the music of these composers. The characteristic features of this music are negation of the basic principles of classical music, advocacy of atonality, dissonance and discord, which are supposed to represent "progress" and "novelty" in the development of musical forms, renunciation of such fundamental principles of musical composition as melody, and preference for confused, neuro-pathological combinations that turn music into cacophony, into a chaotic conglomeration of sounds. This music smacks very much of the spirit of the contemporary modernist bourgeois music of Europe and America, which is a reflection of the decay of bourgeois culture and signifies complete negation of musical art, its impasse.

An essential feature of the formalistic trend is also the renunciation of polyphonic music and singing, based on the simultaneous combination and development of several independent lines of melody, and preference for monotonic, unisonant music and singing, often without text, which implies violation of the polyphonic musical harmony characteristic of our people and leads to the impoverishment and decline of music.

While riding roughshod over the finest traditions of Russian and Western classical music, and renouncing

these traditions as "obsolete," "old-fashioned" and "conservative," and while entertaining a supercilious contempt for composers who conscientiously endeavour to master and develop the methods of classical music, regarding them as adherents of "primitive traditionalism" and "epigonism," many Soviet composers have, in their eagerness to achieve falsely-conceived originality, divorced their music from the requirements and artistic tastes of the Soviet people. They have segregated themselves in a narrow circle of experts and musical gourmands, have degraded the important public function of music and narrowed down its significance, restricting it to catering to the perverted tastes of individualistic-minded aesthetes.

The formalistic trend in Soviet music has given rise, among a certain section of Soviet composers, to a one-sided interest in complex forms of instrumental symphony music without text, and has been productive of a contemptuous attitude to such musical genres as opera, choral music, popular music for small orchestras, folk instruments, vocal ensembles, etc.

All this inevitably culminates in the breakdown of the fundamentals of vocal culture and dramaturgic craftsmanship, so that composers lose their ability to write music for the people. Proof of this is provided by the fact that not a single Soviet opera has been produced in the recent period that can compare with the classical Russian operas.

The divorce of some Soviet music workers from the people has reached the stage when they subscribe to the "theory" that many contemporary Soviet composers are not understood by the people because of the people's supposed "immaturity," which prevents them from appreciating complex musical compositions. According to this "theory," the people will learn to appreciate these compositions in a hundred years, and there is no need to be disturbed by the fact that some musical productions

fail to attract audiences. This utterly individualistic and fundamentally anti-popular theory has served as an additional stimulus to certain composers and critics of music to fight shy of the people, to disregard the criticism offered by the Soviet public and retire into their own shells.

The encouragement of these and similar views is causing the greatest harm to Soviet musical art. A tolerant attitude towards these views is tantamount to fostering among representatives of Soviet musical culture tendencies that are alien to it, that lead to an impasse in the development of music, to the nullification of musical art.

The wrong, anti-popular and formalistic trend in Soviet music is likewise having a fatal effect on the training and education of young composers in our conservatories, and above all in the Moscow Conservatory (director Comrade Shebalin), where the formalistic trend predominates. The students are not taught to respect the finest traditions of Russian and Western classical music, are not trained in the spirit of love for folk art and for democratic musical forms. The compositions of many conservatory students are but a blind imitation of the music of Shostakovich, Prokofieff and others.

The Central Committee notes the absolutely intolerable state of affairs with regard to Soviet music criticism where opponents of Russian realistic music and supporters of decadent formalistic music hold a dominant place. Every new production by Prokofieff, Shostakovich, Myaskovsky and Shebalin is extolled by these critics as a "new victory for Soviet music." They glorify the subjectivism, constructivism, extreme individualism and deliberate complexity of this music, in other words, precisely the things that should be subjected to criticism. Instead of endeavouring to demolish the pernicious views and theories that are foreign to the principles of socialist realism, music critics themselves help to disseminate these views

by lavishly praising and proclaiming as "progressive" composers who subscribe to false ideas and canons.

Musical criticism has ceased to express the opinion of the Soviet public, the opinion of the people, and has become the mouthpiece of individual composers. Prompted by considerations of personal friendship, some music critics have supplanted objective criticism based on principle by servility and kowtowing to leaders of the musical world and make it a point to praise everything they produce.

All of this signifies that survivals of bourgeois ideology have not yet been overcome among part of the Soviet composers, and these survivals are being nurtured by the influence of present-day decadent West European and American music.

The Central Committee holds that this unsatisfactory state of affairs on the Soviet music front is the result of the wrong policy pursued by the Committee on Arts of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R. and by the Organization Committee of the Union of Soviet Composers.

The Committee on Arts (Comrade Khrapchenko) and the Organization Committee of the Union of Soviet Composers (Comrade Khachaturyan), have not encouraged the realistic trend in Soviet music. The basic principles of this trend are the acceptance of the immense progressive role of the classical heritage, and in particular, of the traditions of the Russian school of music, the utilization of this heritage and its further development, the blending of high standards of idea-content with artistic perfection of musical form, fidelity and realism in music, its profound organic contact with the people and their music and song, and high professional skill coupled with simplicity and accessibility of musical compositions. Instead both bodies have, in effect, abetted the formalist trend, which is alien to the Soviet people.

The Organization Committee of the Union of Soviet Composers has become a tool of a group of formalist

composers and has been turned into the principal breeding centre of formalistic distortions. A stale, stuffy atmosphere prevails in the Organization Committee. There is no creative discussion; the leading officials of the Committee and the music critics grouped around them shower lavish praise on anti-realistic and modernistic productions that deserve no support, and regard as second-rate, pass over and treat with contempt all compositions of a realistic character which endeavour to continue and develop the classical heritage. The very composers who pride themselves on their "innovation" and "super-revolutionism" in music come out in the Organization Committee in support of the most hidebound conservatism and are disdainfully intolerant of even the slightest criticism.

In the view of the Central Committee, this state of affairs, and the attitude to the tasks of Soviet music which has taken shape in the Committee on Arts and in the Organization Committee of the Union of Soviet Composers, can no longer be tolerated, for they are detrimental to the development of Soviet music. The cultural requirements and artistic tastes of the Soviet people have grown immensely in these past years. The Soviet people expect their composers to produce music of high ideological and technical standards in all genres—opera, symphony, choral music, popular song and dance music. In our country composers enjoy unlimited opportunities for creative work, all the conditions have been furnished for a real efflorescence of musical culture. Soviet composers have audiences unknown to any composer in the past. It would be unforgivable indeed for composers not to avail themselves of these immense opportunities and to fail to direct their creative efforts along the correct path of realism.

The Central Committee, C.P.S.U.(B.) resolves:

1. To condemn the formalistic trend in Soviet music as an anti-popular trend which in practice leads to the nullification of music.
2. To instruct the Propaganda and Agitation Divi-

sion of the Central Committee and the Committee on Arts to rectify the position on the music front, eliminate the defects indicated in this decision and ensure the development of Soviet music along the path of realism.

3. The Central Committee calls on all Soviet composers to appreciate the high requirements which the Soviet people set for works of music, to discard everything that tends to detract from our music and hampers its development, and to achieve such progress in their creative work as will make for a rapid upsurge of Soviet musical culture and will be productive, in all spheres of musical art, of significant, high-quality compositions worthy of the Soviet people.

4. To endorse the organizational measures taken by the appropriate Party and Soviet bodies to improve the position in the field of music.

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